

# Child and Family Services Update

September 26, 2003

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## Director's Message

### Poor Chameleon!

*By Richard Anderson, Director*

I recently picked up and started perusing one of the children's books that the first grade teacher at my house often brings home. Pretty soon I was reading with interest. I read about the blending in of this lizard – how difficult it was for him or her (couldn't tell which) to make a significant contribution. It just kept blending in with everything it came up against. First it was leafy green, then red wagon red, then autumn orange, and so on. There was no distinction, no difference, and no unique color contribution to its immediate environment. It just blended in – adapting to its next contact. It was a sad little chameleon – no identity of its own. How awful!

As often happens, before long my mind was wandering back to work. It occurred to me that there are, sometimes, situations where our contributions of social work education, the skills in our Practice Model, our focused training, and much of that which makes us unique and valuable can be left out when we just blend in with our contextual environment. No added value – no unique contribution – just blending in.

When we share with others our knowledge and skills from our professional arena, we make a contribution that is truly unique – a gift of far greater value than merely blending in. At times, we may hear jokes about our contributions (recently, I responded to one of our staff who felt slighted by joking comments about our Model from an attorney, asking, "Have you ever told an attorney joke?") Who else will do the work of going to the children and families' settings regularly to get the perspective that we depend on in our work? Who will search out support systems to be there for the long term after the professionals are gone? Who else will provide a well-rounded assessment, including the whole person, the whole family picture? Who will keep up with adjustments that need to be made in services as the child and the family progress through their plans?

A similar list could be given for each of our great partners in this work. The Assistant Attorneys General, the Guardians ad Litem, healthcare nurses, mental health and substance abuse workers, foster families, school personnel, and on and on. We each bring a unique contribution to this challenge and aspiration of assisting children and families.

As I view the professional helping process, one of the most disheartening things I see is when a place at the professional table is filled by a person who has chosen to simply blend in with the group. A much-needed contribution has been lost. When it is us at the table, a great strength – the skills, experiences and unique contribution our division has to offer – may be sacrificed. When we follow another professional, or act like another agency, or let them decide alone, then our contribution is negated. It's good to provide support to others in the professional team. But real partnerships are made up of the solid contributions of each of the partners – not just the support of each other. If we don't do our job, then our job won't get done. The chameleon blends in. It adapts to the next contact. It just changes colors to fit in.

From my view, every day I see unique contributions through effective work done in very difficult situations. I see the skills, the Model, adding to the teams' strength in providing safety, permanence, and well-being. I also see teams where we have just blended in. Often, in those cases, it's hardly surprising when the outcome turns out very differently from what we really need and want. We just provided an overview of the Practice Model for our contract providers. A group of over sixty participated, and comments from them were very positive. To me, the most significant feedback came from a provider who said that in all his years of working with us, he currently feels that he has the best support from the division he has ever had. He referred to the ability to bring the child and family teams together and to have a full

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assessment of the child and families from which to work. I find that more and more of our partners are expecting and appreciating our combined contribution. Let's not let them down. They are very aware of what we have committed to and need to deliver.

Remember, that in almost all of the work we do, we are the ones who are really accountable for the outcomes. Sure, we can blend in and let someone else decide our work, but the outcome of that decision will be the responsibility of the division. I have often seen circumstances where we have abdicated our role to another member of the team, and then watched as we faced the consequences for the decision when it turned out wrong. Chameleons are interesting to watch. They just don't stand out – for anything! They have no choice. We do!

## Strengths – Celebrating Success

### Great Showing on the Federal Child and Family Services Review!

*By Richard Anderson, Director*

Last spring, we completed our first Federal Child and Family Services Review. We were the thirty-fourth state to be reviewed (third year of the reviews).

How did we do? The final report that arrived on September 9, 2003 read much like what we were told by the Federal Reviewers when they were here. They told us they were impressed! They said that they had not seen such a level of the expected practice in any of the other reviews. They applauded your work. They applauded our foster parents. They applauded the Practice Model. It took them a few looks to believe what a relatively short time it takes in Utah for a child to move from permanent deprivation to adoption (far better than the national standard) – we lead the nation in this area. (This success is shared with the Assistant Attorneys General, Guardians ad Litem, and the courts, in particular, as well as many other partners!) This was a review of our entire child welfare system. They also told us we were the only state to receive one hundred percent on meeting the educational needs of children in care. (Just go on a Qualitative Case Review to find out why this is so – the educators in our state are very committed to the children). We were the only state to have achieved one hundred percent on any item.

Of the fourteen measures in the review, we met or exceeded the national standard in eight of them. (If you go to our Website, you will be able to review the executive summary and the full report.) When we look at all of the thirty-three states that were reviewed before us, we find that only one state had passed more standards than Utah. Let's celebrate our success!

You will know much more of the detail shortly. We are now required to design a plan to address those areas where we were not in substantial conformity. That plan, the "Program Improvement Plan" (PIP) is due by October 24. (Many of you are working on teams to address specific parts of the plan.) We are cautiously optimistic that this plan will match what we are already doing in the Milestone Plan. Also, much of what we need to improve is already in current plans of the division. You will have much more detail available as we implement the PIP.

You are a great staff. Your diligent efforts are achieving the desired results in the lives of many children and families. Let's keep our momentum by supporting each other and building increased effectiveness in working with our partners. This success is shared with all those who work with us in the Child Welfare System of Care. Thank you for your good work.

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## Hurray!

*By Richard Anderson, Director*

**Patti Van Wagoner**, who has been on career mobility as Deputy Director for the division, has officially accepted the position of Deputy Director and will no longer be on career mobility. I appreciate her great attitude and good work and the atmosphere she has helped create in the division. Congratulations, Patti! I am so grateful you decided to stay with us. Thanks.

## Good Things From our Regions!

*By Richard Anderson, Director*

I'd like to congratulate two Southwest Region staff members who were honored recently!

**JanaLee Gregory** was selected as the winner of the "Public Employee Salute." This award was read on KSL Newsradio 1160, during the Doug Wright Show between 11:30 and 12:05 on July 2, 2003. **Annette Orton** was also selected as winner of the "Public Employee Salute" on July 30, 2003. Way to go you guys! Thank you for your hard work, your dedication to the State of Utah, and its children and families, your devotion to the "best practice model," and your attention to even the smallest details. We salute you, too!

We, at the State Office, are hoping all our regions will let us know when their people win awards and accomplish terrific things. We would like to share these moments with all of you. Thanks so much!

## Great Job Richfield and Cedar City Offices!

*By Brad McGarry, Office of Services Review*

I recently did an office comparison of scores on the Qualitative Case Review (QCR) and Case Process Review (CPR) for last year and found the following: Richfield is outstanding! Followed close behind by Cedar City. Richfield passed system performance on all of its QCR cases last year and exceeded the standard on home-based and foster care on the CPR. Richfield was one percentage point below the standard for CPS. If there were a traveling "Richard Anderson" gold cup for excellence, in my humble opinion, Richfield would have it for this year.

The silver cup belongs to Cedar City as it passed system performance on all of its QCR cases last year and exceeded the standard for foster care. It was three percentage points below the CPS standard and twelve percentage points below the standard for home-based.

Congratulations Richfield and Cedar City offices!

## Protection

### Breakthrough Series Collaborative for the Recruitment and Retention of Foster Parents

*By Angela Khairallah, Out-of-Home Specialist*

As part of the pilot site project in the Price and Castle Dale areas for the Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) for the Recruitment and Retention of Foster Parents, exciting results are being accomplished through engaging, teaming, and collaboration among Child and Family Services staff, birth families, community partners, and resource parents. In January 2003, CPS workers began asking families during CPS investigations about kinship support. CPS workers engaged families by simply asking the following questions, "Who are your supports?" and "Who helps you care for your children?" CPS workers, along with other frontline staff, became very excited about how responsive and rapidly families provided them with information about kin. The kinship information could then be used to begin locating and exploring possible kinship options if it was necessary for the child to be placed out of home.

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When this started in January 2003, the average length of time it took for a child to be placed with kin was 52.8 days. After CPS workers began asking these simple questions, we began to see a decrease in the average number of days it takes for a child to be placed with kin. After approximately six months, the average for July 2003 was 30.09 days for a child to be placed with kin. Another result is not only are children being placed with kin faster, more children are being placed with kin. The numbers increased from five children in January 2003 to nineteen children by July 2003.

## Development

### Utah Marriage Website

*By Linda Wininger, State Milestone Coordinator*

Here is an interesting Website from our own state government! You can access it from the Department of Human Services Website or go directly to it at <http://www.utahmarriage.org/>. The Website includes lots of information on strengthening relationships (not just marriage relationships). Right now, free PREP workshops are being offered all over the state. PREP is one of the most comprehensive and well-respected marriage enhancing/divorce-prevention programs in the world. PREP is a skills and principles-building curriculum designed to help partners say what they need to say, get to the heart of the problems, and enhance their bonds.

Also included on the Website are fun dating ideas for couples. Check them out. There are some pretty interesting ideas included!

## Permanency

### Book Review – The Great Gilly Hopkins

*By Linda Wininger, State Milestone Coordinator*

*“Gilly,” said Miss Ellis with a shake of her long blonde hair toward the passenger in the back seat. “I need to feel that you are willing to make some effort.”*

*Galadriel Hopkins shifted her bubble gum to the front of her mouth and began to blow gently. She blew until she could barely see the shape of the social worker’s head through the pink bubble.*

*“This will be your third home in less than three years.” Miss Ellis swept her golden head left to right and then began to turn the wheel in a cautious maneuver to the left. “I would be the last person to say that it was all your fault. The Dixon’s move to Florida, for example. Just one of those unfortunate things. And Mrs. Richmond having to go into the hospital”*

Several months ago I happened onto a wonderful children’s book about a young girl who was growing up in the foster care system. I was immediately drawn into the book and was kept engaged by the wonderful insight that the author has for the thoughts and feelings of Gilly as she fights her emotions and deals with the lack of permanency in her life. Below I’ve included a review of the book from [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com).

### Amazon.com Review

Gilly Hopkins is a determined-to-be-unpleasant 11-year-old foster kid who the reader can't help but like by the end. Gilly has been in the foster system all her life, and she dreams of getting back to her (as she imagines) wonderful mother. (The mother makes these longings worse by writing the occasional letter.) Gilly is all the more determined to leave after she's placed in a new foster home with a "gross guardian and a freaky kid." But she soon learns about illusions—the hard way. This Newberry Honor Book manages to treat a somewhat grim, and definitely grown-up theme with love and humor, making it a terrific read for a young reader who's ready to learn that "happy" and "ending" don't always go together.

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I hope you'll check out this book. It's a great read and could possibly be used with children in foster care to open up and talk about their own situation. It's recommended for children ages nine to twelve years of age.

## Cultural Responsiveness

### National Resource Center for Respite and Crisis Care Services

*By Linda Wininger, Milestone Coordinator*

I recently came across an interesting Website while searching for information on cultural responsiveness. The link is <http://www.archrespite.org/archfs50.htm>. Within the Website is the following case scenario that speaks to the issues of cultural responsiveness.

#### **Case Scenario**

The culture of the child/family entering into respite or crisis services, the education and socioeconomic status of the caregiver(s), and the culture, education, and training of the service counselor all influence the service delivery. The importance of cultural responsiveness as a family care and service essential can be noted in the following case scenario:

A newly immigrated family from a small Caribbean island sought medical services at a public health clinic for their youngest child. Major medical and developmental problems were diagnosed for the six-month-old baby. Prescriptions were given and a two-week follow-up appointment and consultations with specialists were scheduled. The family did not show for the appointment and did not respond to phone calls, mail, or home visits. Clinic staff reported to the state abuse registry indicating possible medical neglect.

#### **Traditional Approach and Results**

The summary report of the child protective services investigation confirmed the neglect allegation, recommended removal of the child. Siblings, ages four and two, were also removed from the home based on the high risk assessment assigned to the family and living environment. The children were placed in three separate foster homes in different cities throughout the county. The six-month-old infant was placed in a therapeutic foster home for medically needy infants; the foster parents were white. The four-year-old child was placed with a Southern roots African American family; and the two-year-old was placed with an African American family of Jamaican descent.

The children remained in foster care for eighteen months while the mother attempted to meet the requirements of the permanency plan: parenting classes, visitation with the children, employment. Follow-up information on the family revealed that the mother never sought or refused assistance from any of the available support services, agencies, or referral resources. As a result, neglect reports were filed again. The family reentered the child protective services system again. The cycle began anew.

#### **Culturally Responsive Approach and Results**

Anticipating a language barrier and the potential for cultural misunderstandings, the child protective services supervisor assisted the field worker in preparing for the intervention by identifying a community based, bilingual cultural guide to accompany the worker to the family's home. The assessment of the family revealed that the mother had taken the child regularly to the community faith healer for medical care as she and the other neighbors did



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for all medical emergencies/services. The faith healer had cared for her and the other children successfully and the mother had complete trust in the healer and the advice given.

The mother spoke and understood very little English and was also afraid to seek traditional services due to her incomplete immigration paperwork. She very rarely ventured outside her neighborhood and was unfamiliar with the transportation service to the clinic located downtown. She stated that everything was okay and it was just a matter of time before the remedies and care provided by the community healer would improve the health of the baby. Pending the husband's immigration to the country, neighbors and friends were supplying food, rent money and other basic help.

New appointments were scheduled at the clinic for the baby, the siblings, and the mother. The mother was told that the faith healer would be welcomed to accompany the family to the clinic, and assured that her immigration status would not lead to deportation and removal of the children from the home, as she had been forewarned by her neighbors. Transportation would be provided and an interpreter made available at the medical appointment to gather information and to explain what was happening.

Plans were made to help the mother complete immigration paperwork, attend English classes, learn the transportation system, and secure food stamps and other support services. The faith healer was invited to accompany the family to any or all support functions. Respite care was arranged with both community supports and formal agencies to allow the mother to fulfill her obligations and explore other survival options. The family remained together throughout the process in their own community and within their cultural environment.

## Conclusion

To fully achieve the goals of respite and crisis care and other family support services, it is essential that all aspects of program operations, staff development and training incorporate and support cultural responsiveness. The shift to cultural responsiveness and multicultural programming will require change, risk-taking, training, courage, and coordinating a variety of new and different resources. Culturally responsive services will support the attitudes, knowledge, and skills essential for successful living in a complex and diverse world, and produce outcomes that are long lasting and that strengthen and keep families together.

The Practice Model Principle of Cultural Responsiveness is a difficult one to get a handle on. This section in the Update will be used to help all of us understand what it means to be culturally responsive and how it can help us to better serve the families we work with. If you have information that would be helpful to share with others and would fit in this column, please send it to us!

## Partnership

### Assistance for Caseworkers Working with Deaf Children

*By Barbara Thompson, Department of Human Services*

Earlier this week I was meeting with Robin Arnold-Williams regarding deaf children and some of their issues. Robin suggested I contact Child and Family Services regarding some resources for caseworkers. Here are two things that may be helpful:

- The division directors approved a paper in April 2003 that listed the names of some people who have expertise in working with the deaf. They are willing to form a resource group

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when help is requested by our caseworkers. This paper is attached to the Update and is entitled, "Update 092603--Proposal for Working with Deaf 4th Draft 042103."

- There are three individuals at the Deaf Center who are willing to go to agencies, at no cost, to provide training and insight into working with deaf children or the children of deaf parents. These people are **Joene Nicolaisen**, **Mitch Moyers**, and **Lynnette Johnson**. The phone number at the Deaf Center is 801-263-4860. (The actual name of the Deaf Center is the Utah Community Center of the Deaf & Hard of Hearing.)

If you need any other information or if you want to discuss this, please give me a call at 801-538-9875.

## Organizational Competence

### Through the Eyes of the Child

*By LeRoy Franke, Adoption Specialist/Independent Living Coordinator*

At an Adoption Exchange business meeting in Denver this year, the Exchange's executive director, Dixie Davis, had arranged a special speaker for us. His name was **Eric Cahn**, author of *Maybe Tomorrow*, "A Hidden Child of the Holocaust" as told to Marilyn Saltzman (published by Casan Publishing Co., Arvada, Colorado). Eric's mission in writing the book and his lectures is two-fold: 1) to dispel any myths that may exist about the reality of the holocaust and its devastating effect on millions of lives; and 2) to pay tribute to the resiliency of our human spirit, which allows us to ultimately triumph over life. Eric has addressed thousands of students and adults to share his hope for a better tomorrow. He has graciously granted me permission to use his very personal and precious life experiences detailed in his book in the following article.

I am sharing a brief part of Eric's story because it presents through the eyes of a boy a poignant story of his journey through horrific deprivation, emotional neglect, and multiple losses through transitions. It serves as a strong reminder to each of us as child welfare professionals to never forget that the child is always at the center of our practice. Most of all, however, Eric's story teaches of the resiliency of the human spirit in the children we serve.

In our child welfare work we can quickly become overwhelmed with the complexity and intensity of our task, including required compliance items and the coordination with the host of other adult child and family team members to build the network of support for the child and family. Yet, through it all, we must never lose our ability to view the impact of our involvement "through the eyes of the child." Only as we engage the child at their level of understanding, and tend well to their underlying needs, fears, hopes, and dreams, can our team really develop a meaningful plan to fulfill that child's dreams for a secure, happy future.

Eric was born a German Jew in 1938. When he was only two, he and his family were placed in a squalid holding camp in the French Pyrenees. Two years later with his mother's permission he was taken from her loving arms and away from the camp to an orphanage, then to be hidden in the basement of a French Christian family. This selfless act by his mother delivered him from her fate - death at Auschwitz. Selfless foster families also saved many other Jewish children's lives. Unfortunately, scores of other children whose parents could not let them go died with their parents in the Nazi death camps.

Eric still reports that one of the biggest holes in his life has been his inability to find the French Christian family who rescued him. As a four-year-old boy, they took him in from 1942 to 1944, at tremendous risk of their own lives and the lives of their own children. Eric still asks himself, "Why were they willing to shelter this little Jewish boy? How did they manage their meager



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rations to also feed him? How did they create the feeling of safety in his small basement room while still warning him of the dangers lurking outside?"

Eric was a prisoner for two years in a dark basement room, interspersed by brief moments of care from a loving foster mother. Eric reports, "She was disinclined to stay too long lest she create suspicion among the children upstairs who were impatiently waiting for their breakfast. I was never allowed to eat my meals with them; it was too risky. As the door closed firmly behind my caretaker, so did my moments of happiness...Quietly I cried for my mother, wishing with all my might that she would come and rescue me. The tears streamed down my face, and I shifted to the edge of my bed and waited for her. When the solitude overwhelmed me, I curled up in a ball, gathered my blanket around my neck and sought refuge in sleep."

"Hundreds of times each day I raced to the bottom of the stairs, thinking I had heard the door opening. I invented a wishing game...the French woman would come back. Or better yet, the cellar door would open and my mother would magically appear to me."

"The image of my mother's face grew dimmer with each passing day. I sat on the edge of my cot, closed my eyes, squeezed them tight, and tried to recall the color of my mother's eyes and hair. But when I tried to see her in my mind's eye, her features became a blur, melding with those of my French caretaker. I couldn't remember my mother!"

"Terrifying questions screamed from my soul though not a word escaped my throat. Why can't I picture my own mother's face? Where did she go? Will I ever see that face again?"

"The most horrifying notion shot like a bullet through my mind: What if she finally comes to rescue me and I don't know her? The thought was more than I could bear. I crumbled on the cot and sobbed into my hands, the saltwater tears mixing with the fear-induced sweat."

"The liberation of France meant the liberation of Eric. Finally, after two years in hiding, I could break out of my underground home and wander freely without fear. But freedom had as little meaning to me as to a caged bird. I feared leaving the safety of my basement and the kindness of the French family. Life with them was all I could remember. I had forgotten my mother's face and what it was like to be enveloped in her arms. I had forgotten my home in Mannheim and had buried the memories of Gurs."

"In six years of life, I had been uprooted four times; first leaving Mannheim, then Gurs, then the orphanage, and now the kind French family. Once again I was being sent off into the unknown."

Living again in an orphanage, Eric was reunited with a sister he never knew he had. "Who is this stranger, I thought? I didn't remember any sister, and I felt nothing for her. I had learned to survive on my own; no other relationship endured."

Eric spent more time in the orphanage, then a reunion for he and his sister with his "Vater" which turned out to be a disaster. He found in his father's home an angry, demanding housekeeper, Theresa, and a stern, cold father.

Vater later arranged for the children to be moved to live with an aunt and uncle and grandparents in Pueblo Colorado. Eric recalled how hard he had sought in vain to obtain the love of his father. "My fate was already sealed, and soon I would be exiled to a foreign land and a foreign language for the third time in my short life."

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Eric lived three years with his Opa and Oma (an aunt and uncle) in Pueblo. But at that time the grandparents felt they could no longer care for the children. "Like Vater before them, gradually Oma and Opa made us aware that we were going to be sent away. We were to be placed in foster homes in Denver while our grandparents moved to New York. Oma, Opa, and their children must have had long discussions to reach this conclusion, but we were kept in the dark."

"We never new why Oma and Opa decided to retire at that time or why they didn't want to take us along. We never heard any reasons why Simon or Molly, the married children, didn't offer to take us in. The family was shedding its responsibility for us as easily as it had accepted that obligation only three years earlier. Like the useless scraps of metal in Opa's yard, we were to be discarded to lighten their load as they departed for a new life."

"I was buffeted by the winds of contrary feelings. I was eager to escape Oma's mockery, but I also feared the unknown. Once again I was being forced into a new home with new rules and a new set of family relationships. But my wellspring of eternal hope bubbled up. From an unknown source of deep faith, I believed that tomorrow would be better, and I was more pleased than worried about leaving Pueblo."

Eric was placed into a foster home in Denver. He began his experience with excitement and enjoyed the prosperity and enjoyment of living with his new family. He had a little foster brother he played with and baby-sat, got a part-time job, and was enrolled in school. Yet, now a fifteen-year-old teenager with a limited ability to trust adults because of his previous losses, Eric did not have the emotional preparation or skills to join and become a part of a family.

"The Perlmutter tried to make me a part of the family, and each Saturday I attended synagogue with them. After services, Mr. Perlmutter took me on a tour of his construction projects around the city. I was a shy, somber teenager without much to say on these trips. Mr. Perlmutter tried to draw me out, but I was afraid to vent my feelings, lest I explode. The sorrow of a life's worth of loneliness stayed bottled up inside."

"I had been properly raised by a series of autocrats who had taught me to be seen and not heard. I had occasionally tested their authority with dire consequences, so I acquired the façade of obedience in Vater's house and Oma's. But now I was growing up, and my battles with authority became more frequent. I demonstrated the typical teen's blemishes of rebellion."

Eric had arranged to have some friends over to the house without the foster parents' permission. When told he had to cancel his plans, Eric recalls the following. "I said nothing but seethed inside with anger."

"I was drowning in a whirlpool of emotions. The raging tide of my fifteen-year-old hormones brought waves of anger and rebellion, and cascades of dark depression. A lucky teenager finds an adult anchor to steady him through the tempestuous ride of adolescence. I had no one. I had learned at an early age that it was risky to depend on any other human being. My young life had been burdened with too many losses to seek safe harbor in any adult's arms."

"The only adult women I could remember had been cruel – first Theresa, then Oma. And the men had abandoned me – first Vater, then Opa. How could I confide in either Mr. or Mrs. Perlmutter? I had no experience with trust."

"I went through my months at the Perlmutter in solemn solitude. I felt like a permanent guest in their home rather than as a foster son. As I entered the blond brick house after school each

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day, I was chocked by the need to try to fit in. Home was not a place of security, but an ordeal of botched connections.”

“I continued to meet regularly with my social worker, and I didn’t hide my unhappiness with life at the Perlmutter’s. I saw them as strangers with whom I had nothing in common. They saw me as an ungrateful, rebellious teenager.”

“We surrendered to my history after nine months of trying to become a family. It was not to be. The Perlmutter’s, my caseworker, and I decided mutually that I would be better off somewhere else.”

Eric left to live in a Denver Jewish National Home for Asthmatic Children, where he found meaningful adult mentors, caring relationships, and life-long connections that helped him launch into successful adulthood. Eric now lives near Denver, a father of three, a happily married, successful, businessman. He and his sister are very close. Yet through the rest of his story he points out that even throughout his adult life the issues from his past come up over and over again, and must be faced anew. It is through his loving family and friends that he is able to maintain his unbridled optimism for the future.

I can’t help but think what our current practice of child welfare could have done for Eric at each of the critical transition points of his care. With our child centered practice and the functional assessment developed by the team we could have addressed Eric’s fears, hopes, and dreams. We would have included mentors that would have developed and secured the trust and lifelong connections for Eric so he would not have had to find that on his own outside of our care. How different his journey would have been. How different that journey is for thousands of children in our care, who have achieved love, security, and well-being in their own homes, with their relatives, or with new families because we have understood their needs and developed support systems to meet them. Thanks to all of you who have worked so hard to make the difference in so many children’s lives.

Yet, there are still many children, like Eric, for whom our efforts are still not enough. Because of conflicting family needs, legal entanglements, or other reasons, the needs of the child still may get lost in the diverse needs of the adults, the complexity of the situation, or workload demands. We need to renew our efforts and recommit ourselves to always view the situation “through the eyes of the child,” and to help our child and family teams to do that as well.

Thank you Eric, for your courage, your resilience, and your openness in sharing. The personal sharing of what goes through the mind of a child separated from his family are important lessons for us to learn. Even more importantly, we have learned from your valuable lessons about the human spirit and the power of faith in a “better tomorrow.” We especially “get it” when you teach us about the important role we play as “brothers and sisters,” in lifting the souls of abandoned, neglected, and abused children to a better place.

## Utah Cares – a Screening and Referral Website

*By Jeri Griffin-Jensen, Title IV-E Medicaid Trainer*

Currently, the Department of Human Services (DHS) is participating with the Department of Health and the Department of Workforce Services in the electronic Resource and Eligibility Product (eREP) project, which will replace the PACMIS eligibility system. The eREP system will be a Web-based browser system that customers/clients and employees can access via the Internet. One part of eREP, which will be an exciting resource for DHS staff, is a Website that will be launched in late October 2003, called **Utah Cares**. This Website will be a place where anyone interested in services within Utah will be able to find state programs and community services that may be of assistance to them based on their current needs.

# Child and Family Services Update

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The **Utah Cares** Website will provide anytime access (24/7) to information about providers of basic community and state services. Customers, whether state employees or public citizens, will be given the option of choosing from a number of different “service” areas such as housing, food, clothing, financial, legal, health, safety, and abuse. They will be asked specific questions about their needs or needs of a family member or others. Their answers will provide a list of providers with the most accurate resources for their needs.

The list of providers is generated from the current information retained by the Information and Referral Centers (I&R's) in Utah, Davis, Weber, and Salt Lake counties as well as the Five County Resource Directory. From this list of providers, customers will be given basic information, if applicable, about that provider to include fees, address (unless not appropriate), phone number, directions, and a brief description of what services are provided. There will be some providers that the customer will have the option of either obtaining an online referral or submitting an electronic referral for services.



## Professional Competence

### Profiling Supervisory Skills

*By Reba Nissen, Mentor Program Coordinator*

When **Shirley Sutton** is asked to talk about her strengths as a Child Welfare Supervisor, she speaks about them in the context of her relationships with others. She mentions her first supervisor at Child and Family Services, Darlene Sackett, who supported and developed trusting relationships with Shirley and others. She speaks of opportunities she's had to learn from others about family group conferencing and facilitating child and family teams. She talks about the unit she supervises now and the strengths they have that help the unit to be successful in their work with children and families.

When Shirley first became a supervisor in 1996, she decided that she couldn't ask anyone in her unit to do anything she wouldn't do, so she worked alongside them and took on casework responsibilities that others didn't feel comfortable with. She realized, however, that what her staff needed was a leader. If she spent too much time in the field, staff might feel she didn't trust them to do the work. She needed to be available to lead, which meant less time in the field working cases and more time in the office supporting staff. Shirley now has an open-door policy and feels more connected to her team.

Ten keys to Shirley's success are:

- The unit operates as a team and all are contributing members of the team. Team facilitation skills are modeled in staff meetings. Everyone has a voice. Shirley gives the example of the transporter for the unit. She has a very important role and information for the team. The transporter is a respected and valued member of the team.
- Information from administration is passed on in a positive manner. Shirley focuses on getting staff excited about new things, not on dragging them down.
- The unit has opportunities to meet with administration. Shirley empowers workers to feel a part of the organization. She has invited LaRay Brown and Heber Tippetts to meet with her unit, and they model the child and family team meeting process of creating working agreements and sharing strengths and needs.

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- All team members share successes and struggles. Shirley always takes time to acknowledge success and provides support when needed. Shirley's unit makes sure the cowbell is rung whenever a particularly difficult case is closed successfully.
- Worker strengths are recognized and shared at regular staff meetings and in one-on-one meetings with Shirley. When workers can identify their own strengths, they can help the families they work with to identify strengths.
- Others are acknowledged. Shirley's team sends cards acknowledging foster parents who go above and beyond the call of duty and to parents who successfully complete a treatment program, etc. Everyone on the team signs the card.
- Transitions between CPS and permanency are smoother because the unit aligns itself with CPS right at removal. Shirley has worked to build strong relationships of trust and support with the CPS workers and supervisors.
- Good practice with families is modeled in team functions. Shirley models strength and need pairing by matching worker strengths with child and family needs when assigning cases. Shirley also models how to assess family strengths and needs by assessing strengths and needs with workers. Shirley makes it a priority to meet the needs of workers. She reminds us that concrete needs are important and sometimes overlooked. Just like beds or adequate transportation are important for our families, a computer or cell phone that works are important for workers.
- Cases that come to the unit are often assigned to two members of the team, one as a primary and another as a secondary worker. This has brought the unit together, provided extra support, and the team has experienced that the work takes less time when shared.
- Shirley reads a lot, mostly child welfare related books and self-improvement books. Two books she's read recently are: *Building Solutions in Child Protective Services*, Insoo Kim Berg and Susan Kelly, and *Signs of Safety*, Andrew Turnell. She incorporates what she learns into her work.

Shirley currently supervises a unit of eight permanency workers, a domestic violence worker, and two support staff. The unit's lead worker and official mentor, Lucinda Ward, has vital CPS information and experience to help the unit connect better with CPS workers and child safety and risk issues. Two members of the unit have CSWs and can provide clinical support to the unit. The domestic violence worker supports the unit in domestic violence cases. Four of the permanency workers have been with Child and Family Services almost two years and the other four have been with Child and Family Services one year or less. Shirley says that what motivates her to come to work each day is being with workers. She enjoys her team and also feels support and trust from administration.

## Anyone for a Little Training?

*By Richard Anderson, Director*

Bet that got your attention! You have just accomplished what many thought was unachievable! We have reached our goal of having everyone who has been with us since January 1, 2003 trained in the Practice Model (there are just a few who decided to take pregnancy leave, became ill, or had some other unexpected happening that precluded getting every one of the five modules completed). Our goal was to complete this by the end of August.

In the last four months, there were ninety-three training sessions held – seven hundred and fifteen staff members were trained! We are now in the phase where all support staff and foster parents are being trained by year-end. This shared foundation of having all of us on the same page in knowing the Practice Model will move us much more quickly to becoming proficient in the skills of the model.